

Fort Sam Houston National Historic Landmark  
Officer's Quarters (Building #11, Staff Post)  
San Antonio  
Bexar County  
Texas

HABS No. TX-3303-4

HABS  
TX  
15-0001  
37D--

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Architectural and Engineering Record  
National Parks Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
FORT SAM HOUSTON NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

HABS  
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OFFICER'S QUARTERS  
(Building #11, Staff Post)

HABS No. TX-3303-4

Location: 11 Staff Post Road, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Present Owner  
and Occupant: United States Army

Present Use: Officer's Quarters

Significance: One of the first fifteen officers' quarters constructed of similar but varying design on Post, built in the early 1880s, the quarters represents the Post's earliest effort to provide housing for officers and their families. Designed by local architect Alfred Giles, this limestone ashlar residence possesses a more distinctive regional quality in comparison to the later quarters built from plans originating in the Office of the Quartermaster General.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: c. 1881
2. Architect: Alfred Giles, San Antonio
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: U.S. Army from date of construction to the present.
4. Contractor: Thomas Carrico. (Thomas W. Carrico was the contractor recorded in the Quartermaster General correspondence. However, both Mary Handy, author of A History of Fort Sam Houston and Mary Carolyn Jutson, author of Alfred Giles: An English Architect in Texas and Mexico credit a "Mr. Coulter" as contractor.)
5. Original Plan and Construction: This limestone ashlar residence has a two-story, symmetrical, double-pile plan with a two-story kitchen wing in the rear. The structure originally had a one-story attached porch on the front. The officer's quarters was built at a cost of \$9,972.
6. Alterations and Additions: The original one-story front porch was changed to a two-tier screened porch in 1908, significantly altering the building's exterior appearance. The central front window on the second story was probably changed to a doorway at this time. On the interior, all walls have been sheetrocked and bathrooms have been added. The kitchen has been modernized.

B. Historical Context:

Number 11 Staff Post has been commemoratively named Travis House in honor of Lieutenant Colonel William Barrett Travis (August 9, 1809-March 6, 1836). Travis was commander of the Alamo garrison at the time of Santa Ana's attack and died in the last hours of the famed Battle of the Alamo.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: Staff Post #11 is one of eight quarters on Staff Post originally built of limestone ashlar in an identical, double-pile symmetrical plan. Designed by local architect Alfred Giles, the house displays prominent segmental arched lintels, window proportions and a bracketed cornice reminiscent of the Italian Villa Style. These features are typical of Giles' work and the work of other architects and builders throughout the region during this period.
2. Condition of Fabric: The condition of the fabric is excellent, well maintained, with no apparent structural problems. The alterations and additions were done sensitively.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all Dimensions: The limestone ashlar building has a center hall plan, 45' x 39'-10", with a rear two-story kitchen/bedroom wing, measuring 25'-2" x 16'-4".

The front facade is five bays wide with a one foot projection of the center entrance bay.

A two-tier attached porch extends across the front. Small, one-story side porches are off the front rooms on the east and west sides. A service porch is along the east side of the rear kitchen wing.

2. Foundations: The foundations are made of limestone ashlar and rubble.

3. **Wall Construction, Finish and Color:** The walls are made of random ashlar limestone in varying surface textures with dressed margins found at each corner. Rear clapboard porch enclosure additions are located on the northeast corner. Clapboard sizes vary, indicating modifications at different times.
4. **Structural System, Framing:** The structural system is comprised of masonry load-bearing wall construction. The framing consists of frame porches and roof system.
5. **Porches, Stoops, Balconies and Bulkheads:** Five bay, two-tier attached screened porch with boxed composite columns is attached to the front south facade. Plain rectangular balusters enclose the second tier; no balusters are on the first floor. The first level flooring is poured concrete; the second floor is tongue-and-groove decking, painted gray. Three-panel rectangular screens in each bay.

One-story frame porches are located on the east and west sides with boxed composite columns and pilasters. Carved brackets support the cornice, with shallow hipped roof above. The side porches are enclosed with cut-out balustrades. Gray painted tongue-and-groove floor decking is raised from ground level on rock piers with lattice work in between.

Rear entry, wood frame utility porch on the northeast corner is supported by rock and concrete piers. The lower half is framed with wide molded clapboards. The upper portion is enclosed with open lattice work and screening. Projecting, wood frame rear entrance shelter extends to the driveway. The flooring is tongue-and-groove, painted gray.

A stone and concrete patio area is located at the northwest corner of the house.

A metal-sheathed cellar bulkhead door in the northwest corner originally served as a coal shoot.

6. **Chimneys:** There are four symmetrically placed brick interior chimneys with corbeled caps, two of which are on the east wall and the other two are along the west wall of the main block. Each has green painted arched metal flashing over the stack openings.

One simpler interior brick chimney is located on the north kitchen wall which also has green metal flashing.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The front entry is an inset double door with upper frosted vertical lights with heavy molding and clipped corners. Below the frosted panes are heavily molded square block panels. A painted single-pane transom above is set in a stilted segmental arched lintel of dressed limestone with a keystone.

The rear kitchen door is a four-panel door with fixed two-pane transom above topped by a standard dressed limestone lintel. The front second-floor door onto the porch is set in a segmental archway. The door has a 2'-6" x 3' upper pane with lower horizontal panel below and single-pane transom light above. The doorway was originally a window. Other doors are standard four-panel doors.

- b. Windows: Windows in the front four main rooms on the first and second floors have 2/2, double-hung sash, and are squared off in segmental arch openings. Windows have stilted segmental arch lintels of dressed limestone with keystones and lug sills. On the first floor, windows are full length to floor, providing access to the front and side porches (screens are hinged for easy access).

The rear two-story wing has 4/4, double-hung sash windows with dressed limestone lintels and sills.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape and covering: The roof is shallow hipped with green composite shingles. A projecting pediment embellished with a circular vent and scroll detail centers the facade. The roof of the kitchen wing is also hipped, with attached shed roofs on the side frame additions.
- b. Cornice and eaves: Simple boxed cornice lined with air circulation vents is located along the soffit. The cornice is supported by carved coupled brackets. The fascia board has molded panels between the brackets on the front and sides. The rear bay has simple boxed eaves without bracket or paneling detail.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. Basement: A small partial basement below the kitchen houses the heating and hot water system. The furnace is in the center of the basement, set one foot below the basement floor.
- b. First Floor: The first floor of the main block is a standard center-hall, double-pile, plan with double parlors on the east side and living and dining rooms on the west side. The main, straight-run staircase to the second floor is in the central hall. The pantry, lavatory, and kitchen are behind the dining room to the north. A full bathroom has been added off the north end of the center entry hall. This area was originally part of the rear porch. A rear staircase runs from the kitchen to the second floor.

The front hallway on the second floor has been partitioned at the south end, creating a walk-through closet space between the center hall and the entrance to the front porch.

2. Stairway: A straight-run staircase with an open well and turned balustrade is located along the east wall of the center hall. Stairs fan slightly at the base, anchored by a 3'-8" high natural wood newel post with a central octagonal mass. The post is inset with contrasting wood panels and surrounding molding on all eight sides.

The staircase has an open string with heavy bead detail along the run. A cedar closet is located in the space beneath.

A simple, two-run enclosed rear staircase runs from the kitchen to the second floor rear servants' quarters. The stairway is approximately 2'-6" wide.

3. Flooring: The basement has poured concrete flooring.

The main first-floor rooms have deep pile gold wall-to-wall carpeting covering original hardwood floors. Linoleum tiles of varying size are found in the two baths, pantry and kitchen areas of the first floor.

On the second floor, gold wall-to-wall carpeting continues in the center hallway. Hardwood floors are found in all other rooms, with the exception of the two second-floor baths, which have tile, and the northwest bedroom in the main front block, which has green wall-to-wall carpeting.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: All walls and ceilings throughout have been sheetrocked in the last fifteen years. The rear wing has slightly lower ceilings in the pantry/kitchen area.
5. Doorways and Doors: Workable paneled pocket doors separate the front and rear rooms in the main block on both the east and west sides of the center hall.

A plastic vinyl accordian door divides the rear northeast room from the center hallway.

A heavy four-panel swinging door separates the dining room from the pantry/kitchen area.

The first floor lavatory along the west wall has a two-light, fixed transom above a standard four-panel door.

The first floor bath addition at the end of the center hall contains original exterior double doors to the original rear porch. Doors are heavy molded four-panel doors with porcelain doorknobs and painted segmental arch transom.

On the second floor, the front closet space at the south end of the center hall now has a sliding, plastic accordian-door divider set in an opening with a four-pane, fixed transom above.

The north end of the center hall on the second floor has double doors which originally provided access onto the rear balcony porch. These doors now lead to the enclosed hallway of the rear bay.

All other doors are four-panel doors with raised panels.

6. Special Decorative Features: Four natural gray slate mantelpieces adorn the first floor fireplaces. The design is simple with decorative incised etching surrounding segmental arched openings. The hearth is covered with 5" square glazed tiles.

A cut glass chandelier is suspended from the center of the dining room ceiling. There are no other ceiling fixtures in the other three main first floor rooms, although outlets exist.

Two corner china cabinets in the dining room have glazed upper hinged doors and lower drawers and cupboards. The top is finished in a broken pediment form. These cupboards are later additions.

All windows in the first floor living, dining, and parlor rooms are inset in wood panels and surrounds approximately one foot deep. Modified cyma recta trim surrounds all doorways and windows. Molded picture rails are found in main rooms on the first and second floor. One foot baseboards in all front rooms have a prominent inverted scotia molding at top and simple quarter round molding at the floor.

Later wooden cabinets are found in the kitchen and pantry.

7. Hardware: Front door has original pressed metal hardware with raised design on the door knob, hinges and door locks. Some early pressed-metal door hinges with finial end knobs remain on other various original doors throughout.

8. Mechanical Equipment:

- a. Heating: Gas-fired furnace in basement supplies hot water radiators throughout the structure with steam heat (originally coal-fired).

Single unit air-conditioners in side windows in front four rooms -- no visible air-conditioners in rear pantry/kitchen area. Individual units on second floor.

- b. Lighting: Ceiling fixtures in the dining room and kitchen/pantry area on the first floor. Plastic ceiling fixtures on the second floor.

- C. Miscellaneous:

Smoke alarms are installed throughout. A floor buzzer system is found in the dining room.

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: Located on Staff Post Road facing south toward the central parade grounds, Building #11 is one of 15 residential structures on the street.
2. Outbuildings: A small frame outbuilding with wide molded siding (as found on frame porch enclosure) is located in the rear of the building -- now vacant or storage area. The building was originally used as "strikers' quarters" -- i.e., for the servicemen assigned to the Staff Post officers residing in the main residence.

This house shares a strikers' quarters (Building #31) with #12. This strikers' quarters is set to the right side of the rear of the house. The building is a simple wood frame clapboard structure with a gable roof. Two single-room living quarters are set side by side. A simple porch runs across the front of the building with narrow chamfered posts and carved bracket supports. A lattice work panel running north-south separates the two entrances and creates two, somewhat private, front porch areas.

A small frame garage is set along the rear service road, with access from private circular driveway in the rear.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings:

Miscellaneous Fort Files, Record Group 77, Center for Cartographic and Architectural Archives, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

Copies of six sheets of original drawings are kept in the Office of the Facilities Engineers and the Post Library, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas.

B. Old Views:

Views of Fort Sam Houston, Record Group 92F-56, Audio-Visual Archives, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

Fort Sam Houston Military Museum, Building #123, San Antonio, Texas.

C. Maps:

1905 map of Fort Sam Houston, Fort Sam Houston Historical Museum (Building #123), Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Real property records, compiled in 1940-1941 as a WPA Project, including measured drawings and structural data, Office of the Facilities Engineers.

Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General Consolidated Correspondence, File 1794-1915, Microfilm Reel from the National Archives and at the Fort Sam Houston Post Library.

2. Secondary and Published Sources:

Handy, Mary Olivia, A History of Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Naylor Inc., 1951.

Jutson, Mary Carolyn Hollers, Alfred Giles: An English Architect in Texas and Mexico, San Antonio, Trinity University Press, 1972.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Correspondence and other miscellaneous files relating to Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas. National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The detailed survey of eighteen (18) architecturally representative structures, and a group of streetscapes, at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, was undertaken in 1980 by the National Architectural and Engineering Record (NAER) after a comprehensive inventory of the Post was conducted. Funding for the project was made possible through the cooperative efforts of the Department of the Army, Fort Sam Houston, and the San Antonio Conservation Society.

This project was under the general supervision of Kenneth Anderson, Acting Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey of the National Architectural and Engineering Record. Sally Tompkins of the NAER staff was project supervisor. Project Historian was Kathryn A. Burns, San Antonio, Texas. Photographic records were provided by David Kaminsky, Roswell, New Mexico.

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(Fort Sam Houston, Building No. 11)  
Fort Sam Houston National Historic Landmark  
11 Staff Post Rd.  
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HABS No. TX- 3303-4

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**ADDENDUM TO**  
**FORT SAM HOUSTON NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK**  
**OFFICER'S QUARTERS**  
(Building No. 11, Staff Post)  
San Antonio  
Bexar County  
Texas

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**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**  
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Department of the Interior  
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